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THE CURRENT FORAGER CONTROVERSY: REAL VERSUS IDEAL VIEWS OF HUNTER-GATHERERS

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The validity of previous portrayals of the Basarwa ('Bushmen' or San), and of foragers in general, has been questioned. Some anthropologists claim that the Basarwa can be viewed as foragers with an autonomous culture distinct from that of their agropastoralist neighbours. Others claim that the Basarwa are the same as other rural poor who make up an underclass within the larger agropastoralist society. Research among recently sedentary Basarwa and a literature review indicate that there is much more variability among Kalahari foraging groups than previously recognized. Some of the debate stems from a failure to acknowledge the cultural diversity that characterizes Basarwa society as a whole. In addition the debate has been marred by biases of theoretical orientation and overgeneralizations. Although there are Basarwa groups who are little different from their agropastoralist neighbours, other groups pursue a primarily, though by no means exclusively, foraging way of life.

In their eagerness to rid anthropology of one myth... [anthropologists] are in some danger of fabricating another, viz., that all of us who lived among hunters and gatherers lied and continue to do so (Silberbauer 1989: 206).

Currently there is debate both within and outside of anthropology, concerning the validity of modern hunter-gatherer, or forager, studies. The most bitter polemics centre on the Basarwa¹ (or 'Bushmen', San of the Kalahari Desert). They involve two groups of anthropologists who are referred to by varying designations including, most recently, the 'revisionists' and the 'Harvard Project group'. The latter is represented most prominently by Richard Lee but includes others not affiliated with Harvard, such as Silberbauer and Tanaka (Wilmsen & Denbow 1990). I refer here to the 'Harvard Project' anthropologists as 'traditionalists', since it is they who uphold the conventional view of the Basarwa as autonomous foraging peoples with a cultural identity different from that of their agropastoralist neighbours (see, for example, Lee 1979; Silberbauer 1981; Tanaka 1980). These researchers portray some Basarwa groups in Botswana as egalitarian band-level hunter-gatherers who have, or had until relatively recently (i.e. the past 50-100 years), a nomadic to semi-nomadic settlement pattern and a site structure that reflects their mobility. The traditionalists see the rapid culture change that characterized the decades between 1960 and 1990 throughout Botswana and Namibia, as having had profound but relatively shallow effects on Basarwa life (Solway & Lee 1990; Yellen 1985*b*, 1990*a*). Interaction with Bantu-speaking peoples is not thought to have completely transformed Basarwa society

nor created a loss of cultural autonomy. Most traditionalists have an evolutionary perspective, although some have an overarching Marxist or ecological theoretical orientation (for examples of the former, see Lee 1979 and elsewhere; for the latter, see Silberbauer 1981 and Tanaka 1980).

By contrast, proponents of the revisionist school contend that twentieth century southern African hunter-gatherer groups are, and have been, locked in an intimate relationship with agropastoralists that has irrevocably changed the very foundation of their culture. In the words of one of their principal advocates, they state that:

...the current status of San-speaking peoples on the rural fringe of African economies can be accounted for only in terms of the social policies and economies of the colonial era and its aftermath. Their appearance as foragers is a function of their relegation to an underclass...[and this has a long history]. The isolation in which they are said to have been found is a creation of our view of them, not of their history.... This is as true of their indigenous material-social systems as it is of their incorporation in wider spheres of political economy in southern Africa (Wilmsen 1989: 3).²

Revisionists do not see Basarwa as a distinct ethnic group because they are thought to represent a 'historically created position in the intersection of processes of ethnogenesis and class formation taking place in Botswana and Namibia....Neither Zhu nor other San peoples' identity or cultural values depend on their being foragers' (Wilmsen & Denbow 1990: 519). The revisionists tend to share a common theoretical orientation that guides their research and interpretations. They couch their views within a world systems political economy model that is thought to be valid for past and present Basarwa society. Revisionists explicitly reject other theoretical orientations, particularly the evolutionary ones common among traditionalist researchers (Wilmsen 1989; Wilmsen & Denbow 1990).

This debate extends beyond who the Basarwa represent and actually questions the validity of general models and interpretations based on modern foraging peoples. Anthropologists who have worked with other 'classical' twentieth century hunter-gatherers have also questioned the portrayal of those groups as autonomous foragers (e.g. for the Pygmies, see Bailey *et al.* 1989; for Philippine groups and others, see Headland & Reid 1989). The debate is particularly interesting because it combines ethnographic data with historical and archaeological data in an integrative way new to Kalahari studies (e.g. Solway & Lee 1990; Wilmsen & Denbow 1990). As a result, the controversy deserves attention, as it is much more complex and goes much further than other recent revisionist debates (e.g. the Freeman-Mead debate; Freeman 1983). I believe one major factor that has given rise to the polemics may be a general lack of appreciation of the amount of diversity present among Basarwa groups, at least on the part of non-Kalahari researchers. In other words, I suggest that researchers on both sides of the debate are correct, depending on the group of Basarwa being studied and on the time period of the research.

Diversity among the Basarwa is the result of several factors, including environmental diversity within the Kalahari Desert. Aspects of this diversity include variations in mobility patterns, ranging from sedentary to nomadic (Kent & Vierich 1989), and dissimilarities in local histories of contact with different Bantu-speaking groups (Solway & Lee 1990). The !Kung, often thought to be

the only type of Basarwa present, have been well documented in numerous studies (e.g. Biesele 1974; Draper 1975; 1976; 1978; Harpending & Wandsnider 1982; Katz 1982; Lee 1979; 1982 and elsewhere; Marshall 1957; 1959; 1962; 1976; Wilmsen 1989; Yellen 1977, 1985*a, b*). The G/wi occupy a more arid part of the Kalahari than the !Kung and have been well described in publications by Silberbauer (1972; 1981; and elsewhere), Sugawara (1988) and Tanaka (1980). Other groups, such as Nharo (Barnard 1988*a, b, c*; Guenther 1979), Kūa (Vierich 1982), Botletli River groups (//Kanikhoë, Bateti, Tshaiti, //Gorokhoë, and Danisan; Cashdan 1986), and Nata River Tuya (Hitchcock 1982), have not received as much attention, at least from non-Basarwa experts.

Hawkes has noted that when 'anthropologists write about hunter-gatherers, more often than not they write about the !Kung' (1987: 342). The tendency to view the !Kung or even the G/wi as archetypical Basarwa has led to and perpetuated the current controversies concerning the existence and nature of hunter-gatherers (as evident in Knauff 1990; Wilmsen 1989; and others). It is suggested that some scholars have merely replaced one stereotype of hunter-gatherers, that of the !Kung in isolation, with another stereotype, that there are no foraging peoples left to study. In this article I attempt to support my contention that neither extreme is valid, at least not for all Basarwa groups, by describing the diversity present in the Kalahari.

Diversity among the Basarwa

Yet it would be premature to suggest that Bushman culture and Bushman identity are at an end... Although there have been many excellent studies of acculturation and social change in recent times (e.g. Hitchcock 1982; Guenther 1979), unfortunately the best-intentioned authors sometimes give the impression that Bushmen today are not only economically dependent, but lacking in traditional values (Barnard 1988*c* 23-4).

Diversity occurs both temporally and spatially in the Kalahari. Depending on the group, there are temporal oscillations between traditional and nontraditional subsistence activities and cycles of interaction with nonforagers (Hitchcock & Ebert 1989; Vierich 1982; Wiessner 1977). Although some revisionists seem to de-emphasize the accelerated pace of change since Botswana achieved independence in 1966, the Kalahari today is changing rapidly, as is most of Botswana (Silberbauer 1991). For example, in the brief period of only five years at a sedentary community located outside the Khutse Game Reserve (fig. 1) I have witnessed the introduction of the first radio owned by a Kutse³ resident (1989), a significant increase in the number of children attending boarding school, and a dramatic change in clothing styles. In 1987 several men and women only wore skin clothing and most girls wore string aprons and boys rectangular cloth genital coverings; by 1990 traditional clothing was only worn occasionally. Despite Wilmsen's (1989) or Schrire's (1980) claims to present a historically balanced view, they see the Basarwa primarily as influenced by Bantu-speakers over the past two thousand years and then again by Europeans hundreds of years ago, but less influenced since then. These authors remain curiously impervious to current historical circumstances and their uneven spatial distribution over the past forty to fifty years⁴. Anthropologists cannot expect conditions to remain the same in an area over periods of even ten or twenty years when change is as rapid as it has been in the Kalahari and other parts of the Third World.

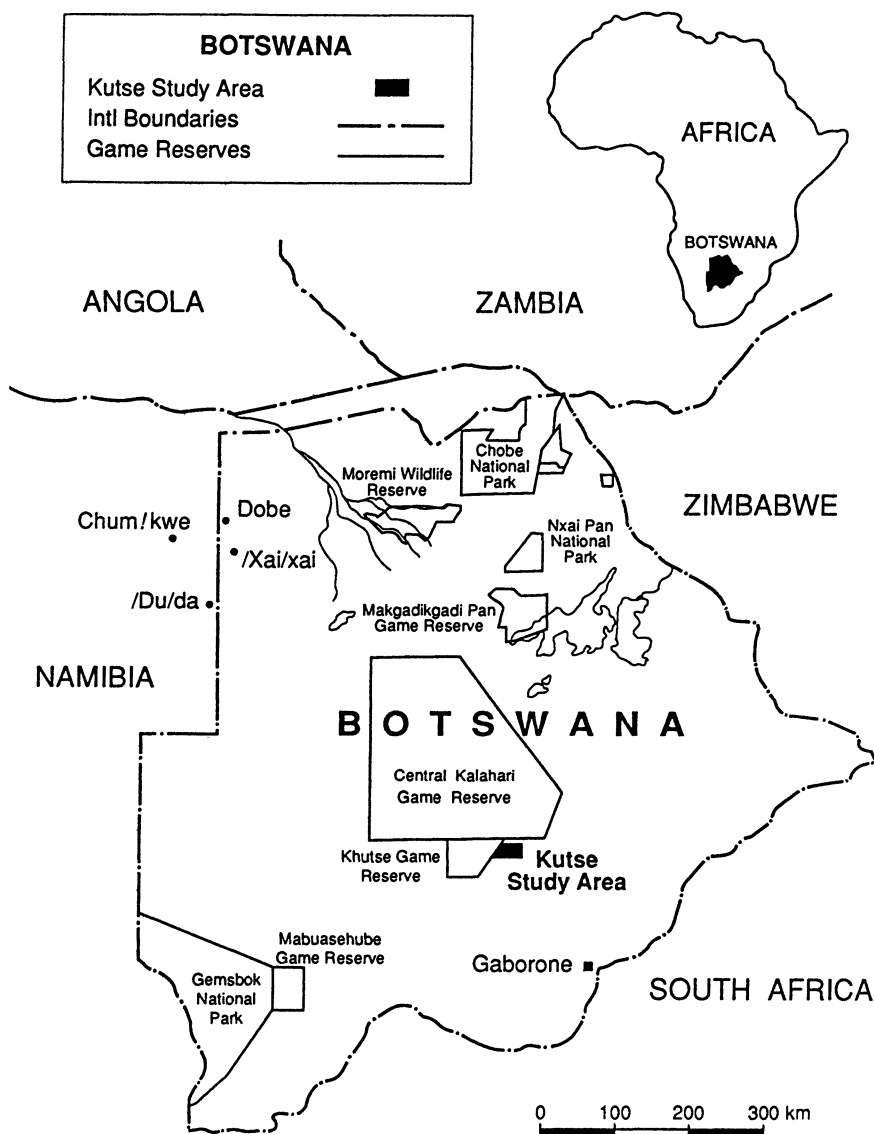


FIGURE 1. Map of Botswana.

Basarwa groups differ in language, kinship, religion, settlement pattern, economy and historical circumstances, but this is rarely recognized, particularly by scientists who have not worked in the region. For instance, whereas Basarwa speak a click language, the different linguistic groups are not mutually intelligible; thus, a Nharo speaker cannot necessarily understand a !Xõ (!Ko) or !Kung speaker. Even sentence structure varies among different Sesarwa languages (Barnard 1988a). According to Traill, the one thing 'we can be sure about, however, is the amazing linguistic diversity amongst these [Sesarwa] languages' (1978: 137).⁵

Differences in kinship organization between Basarwa groups have been documented by Barnard (1978: 221). Religious beliefs are notoriously idiosyncratic and variation in belief structures is prevalent among and even within Basarwa groups, as has been noted by Barnard (1988b: 232), Bieseke (1973: 162), Heinz (1975: 19), and by myself at Kutse. The well-known ritualized gift exchange among the !Kung, *hxaro*, thought to alleviate economic insecurities (Wiessner 1977), is not practised at Kutse or in the Central Kalahari.

Traditionally, Basarwa settlement patterns varied greatly in the Kalahari. For example, the 'Zhu/twasi [!Kung] aggregate in the dry season and disperse in the wet season, while the Central Kalahari Bushmen [e.g. G/wi and G//ana] disperse in the dry season and aggregate in the wet season' (Barnard 1979: 140-1). This is due in part to the diversity of the Kalahari itself. There is permanent water at Dobe in Ngamiland. In contrast, and before boreholes were drilled, there was none in the Central Kalahari, so that during the dry season Central Kalahari Basarwa were forced to disperse to forage widely for moisture-filled plants. Nomadic G//ana tend to use base camps during the rainy season more than G/wi, who tend to live in smaller aggregations (Cashdan 1984). In contrast, Basarwa have been sedentary for decades (if not centuries) along the Botletli and Nata Rivers in northern Botswana (Cashdan 1979; 1987; Hitchcock 1982; 1987a; Hitchcock & Ebert 1984). The !Xǀ appear to be more territorial than the !Kung, Nharo, or G/wi, and also differ in their social relations in respect to resources and territories (Barnard 1979; 1986; Cashdan 1983; Heinz 1972). In addition, there are architectural differences between Basarwa groups. Some now occupy mud-walled huts in Ngamiland (Yellen 1985a, b), whereas at Kutse they only inhabit various kinds of grass huts.

Spatial diversity is also pronounced in the Kalahari. For example, in Ngamiland, the mongongo nut is the staple wild plant resource whereas at Kutse, where I have worked, it is not even available because the climate is too dry and geomorphological conditions are not suitable for its growth. Currently (1987-1990), some !Kung in Ngamiland own a few head of cattle and hunt on horseback (Draper 1991; Volkman 1986; Wiessner 1977; Wilmsen 1989). Because of the lack of water and because of a lack of steady employment, there is no equestrian hunting at the Kutse community, unlike in Ngamiland, *Kade and elsewhere in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve (Hitchcock 1985; Osaki 1984; Sugawara 1988; Tanaka 1987) or in the Nata River area to the north (Hitchcock 1982). Wild game has not been depleted at Kutse as it has been at *Kade (Tanaka 1987), /Xai/Xai (Wiessner 1977), and most boreholes, because there are no cattle at Kutse and because there is an ample supply of game that wanders beyond the game reserve boundaries that border the Kutse community. In Ngware to the northeast of Kutse, depending on the season and year, between ten and sixty per cent. of all Kūa observed by Vierich (from 1976 to 1979) were what she classified as full-time hunters and gatherers 'who follow a daily round with little contact with the Bakgalagadi involving economic interaction' (1981: 181).⁶ Hunting strategies also differ. In Ngamiland and along the Nata River, stone hunting blinds are used to obtain game (Brooks & Yellen 1987; Crowell & Hitchcock 1978). Stone blinds are not used in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve or Kutse

areas. In contrast to other parts of the Kalahari, no guns are used in hunting at Kutse.

Economically, Basarwa range from those who are primarily (though not exclusively) hunter-gatherers, such as at Kutse and in the recent past at Dobe, to fisherpeople, farmers, pastoralists, and employees (Barnard 1989; Bieseke *et al.* 1989; Hitchcock 1982; Hitchcock & Ebert 1984; Hitchcock *et al.* 1987). Within a single Basarwa population, the Kūa, Vierich (1981; 1982) has documented a wide range of economic strategies which vary by locality from year to year, and from individual to individual. Basarwa in the Nyae Nyae area of Namibia engage in some gardening and cattle-raising activities (Bieseke 1990). Not all have a mixed economy yet, although that is the direction in which change and current development programmes are moving (Bieseke: personal communication 1991). However, at this point in time (1991) many still see themselves as primarily hunter-gatherers (*ibid.*). It is very different in Chum!kwe, Namibia, where people have not focused on hunting and gathering for decades. !Kung of the late 1980s in Ngamiland, Botswana, are described as permanently settled and only sporadically hunting and gathering, a phenomenon of only the past ten to twenty years (Kranichfeld & Draper 1990). They currently live 'by a variety of economic strategies, all of which... [are] heavily influenced by the presence of Bantu and their herds' (Draper & Kranichfeld, in press).

Economic, social and political dependence on Bantu-speakers ranges from the complete to the partial, since most Basarwa have interacted with their neighbours to some degree for a long time and are today part of the nation states of Botswana or Namibia (Denbow 1984; Gordon 1984; Guenther 1975; 1976; 1979; Hitchcock 1987*b*; Solway & Lee 1990; Wilmsen 1989). The history and nature of interaction vary from one part of the Kalahari to another, as do the specific Bantu-speaking groups involved. These include various Bakgalagadi groups, Herero, Bateti, Bakhurutsi, Mbukushu, Kalanga and others (Cashdan 1979; Denbow 1984; Denbow & Wilmsen 1986; Heinz 1969; 1975; Hitchcock 1987*b*; Lee 1979; Parkinson 1984; Okihiro 1976; Silberbauer & Kuper 1966; Vierich 1981; Wilmsen 1978*a*; Yellen 1985*a*, *b*).

Some anthropologists contend that the Basarwa are serfs of various Bantu-speaking groups rather than foragers (e.g. Wilmsen 1989).⁷ As with other factors discussed here, this also varies significantly between different Basarwa groups and between different parts of the Kalahari. Another economic variable that differs between groups is the availability of wage work. For example, unlike elsewhere, wage work is not generally available in the Kutse community.⁸ Only one Mosarwa at Kutse has ever worked in the mines in South Africa. However, Basarwa at Dutlwe (Kweneng District) are in an intimate (and often unequal) economic relationship with Bakgalagadi for whom they perform agropastoral chores (see Solway & Lee 1990). This contrasts with the Kutse Basarwa who are not, and were not in the past, locked into a patron-client relationship with Bantu-speaking people. For instance, only fourteen of forty-five Basarwa interviewed had worked for Bantu-speakers, such as Bakgalagadi or Batswana, between the 1988 and 1989 dry seasons, and most performed only single short-term jobs for individuals for whom they had not worked previously (i.e. they were employed rather than involved in an established patronship). Most left work

either because they were not paid or because they had a fight with their employer. Although a majority had in the past worked for Bakgalagadi or Batswana (thirty-one of fifty-two interviewees had worked at least once in their lives), many did so for only a few seasons as young adults before they got married.

This pattern also applies to the past. Only 13 per cent. of fifty-two Kutse Basarwa remembered that their father hunted for a Mokgalagadi or Mokwena family, 20 per cent. did not remember, and 67 per cent. remembered that their father did *not* hunt for Bantu-speakers. Although interview data must always be viewed with caution, 59 per cent. of the Basarwa said their parents did not own goats nor did they herd goats for Bantu-speaking peoples. This is a very different situation from that described for the Dutlwe area (Solway & Lee 1990), but it is similar to the eastern Kweneng inhabited by Kūa Basarwa (Vierich 1981; 1982). According to Vierich (1990, personal communication), the economic relationship between Kūa and local Bakgalagadi in the 1970s consisted primarily of casual, short-term employment; in most cases employment did not involve the same Bakgalagadi household, much less the same lineage. It seems unlikely that people would completely lose their culture merely because they once worked a few seasons for Bakgalagadi or Batswana families with a different economic strategy.

Unlike in the Dobe area, Chum!kwe, Nata, Ghanzi, Dutlwe, *Kade, and elsewhere, at Kutse there are no shops, health clinics, schools,⁹ or opportunities to earn wages (apart from the exceptions described in note 8). Therefore, the Kutse Basarwa do not have access to the goods and livestock that are available to Basarwa in other areas. Like Kutse, the Kūa at Ngware in the eastern Kweneng are only seasonally and opportunistically associated with the Bakgalagadi, and then as employees rather than as clients or serfs (Vierich 1982). Apparently these Kūa also never participated in patron-client relationships with Bantu-speakers (Vierich 1990, personal communication). The fact that Basarwa in some parts of the Kweneng District (for example, Dutlwe) may be disenfranchised groups who are locked into patron-client relationships with Bakgalagadi, performing their agricultural and livestock chores (as described in Solway & Lee 1990), does not make others, such as the Kutse Basarwa, any less foragers.

Has the ownership of small goat herds affected hunting activities to the point that the Basarwa cannot be considered to be foragers, as the revisionists claim? Six field seasons conducted at Kutse, during five different years (1987–1991), indicate that significantly more time is spent on hunting than on any other activity, including tending goats for those who own them. At Kutse, men spend approximately 91 per cent. of their subsistence time foraging in contrast to herding goats.¹⁰ Even the Kutse Basarwa who own goats focus on hunting, perform hunting rituals and have taboos associated only with meat from wild animals (Kent 1991). This can be seen more specifically from my data on two neighbouring hunters who were observed continuously for seven weeks during the 1990 dry season. One man, who did not have goats or keep any for others, hunted for an average of 20.34 hours/week, whereas the other, who did own a few goats, hunted for an average of 20.13 hours/week. These figures do not include time spent in hunting ritual and equipment maintenance. By contrast, the Mosarwa who owned goats spent only 1.95 hours/week caring for them (Kent 1991). The

husbandry of goats, in other words, does not seem to have impinged greatly on subsistence activities nor transformed the society into a pastoralist one.

Up to the 1990 dry season, Basarwa received drought relief food from the government. This programme has been discontinued and women at Kutse have returned to full-time gathering as a consequence.¹¹ The question, then, is not whether Basarwa engage (even peripherally) in activities other than hunting and gathering, because a large number of them clearly do, as do virtually all modern foragers including African Pygmies, Aché and others (see below); rather, the question is whether we can still learn about foraging behaviour by studying such people. The answer to this question depends on the group being discussed. Both in the *types* of resources exploited and the *ways* in which they are exploited (i.e. through collecting, hunting, fishing or farming), the Kutse subsistence pattern differs significantly from that of other Basarwa groups. This includes those who live in Ngamiland, at Ghanzi, along the Nata and Botletli Rivers, and elsewhere (Cashdan 1979; 1984; Guenther 1979; Hitchcock 1982; Hitchcock & Ebert 1984; Kent & Vierich 1989; Lee 1979; Silberbauer 1981; Tanaka 1980; Vierich 1981, 1982; Wiessner 1977). The Kutse Basarwa even differ from other Basarwa living in the Kweneng District. Although they are in direct contact with Bakgalagadi, observational and interview data indicate that the Kutse Basarwa have not assimilated and completely lost their cultural autonomy. By studying groups such as the Kutse Basarwa, we can understand foraging and how it is influenced by sedentism and other factors, thereby enhancing our knowledge of past, present and future small-scale societies. Illustrations from my own research of how such study can enhance our understanding of foraging include analyses of work effort and subsistence endeavours in sedentary as compared with nomadic groups; of the mediation of disputes in the absence of formal chiefs in sedentary aggregated situations; of hunting skill and meat sharing among recently sedentary hunters; and of the prevalence of anaemia and disease in a sedentary community that obtains most meat from hunting (an estimated 95 per cent. or more of all meat is from wild animals, Kent 1991; in press; Kent & Dunn n.d.).

In this section I have been primarily concerned with documenting the diversity among Basarwa groups. It is, however, just as much of an overgeneralization to claim that all Basarwa groups are different as it is to claim that they are all the same. Important similarities include an emphasis on social, political, and gender equality among those groups that are still mobile or recently were mobile; a basic foraging orientation which, among most groups until relatively recently, emphasized hunting and gathering although not necessarily exclusively so; click languages that at least several thousand years ago were closely related (Barnard 1988a); a universal kin categorization and a clear distinction between joking and avoidance partners (Barnard 1978; 1987); a strong emphasis on reciprocity and sharing (Kent; in press); and from several centuries to several decades ago, a nomadic way of life. These similarities have unfortunately overshadowed the differences, so that researchers sometimes generalize uncritically from one particular group of Basarwa at one particular point in time to all others. This overgeneralization has, at times, resulted in confusion and conflict among scholars, and, in addition, has masked the very diversity of human culture,

ecology and biology that we seek to study. So while it is possible to compare Basarwa groups, it must be done critically.

Diversity and flexibility

Anthropologists seem to expect a much greater degree of cultural 'purity' in their hunter-gatherers than they require of any other peoples they study.... But for the most part, there is no reason to suppose that Bushmen have been out of contact with the outside world, that they should be out of contact, or that contact in itself necessarily threatens the resilience of their cultures... Bushmen do not cease to be Bushmen when they encounter other peoples or come to be dominated by them.... (Barnard 1989: 111).

In my opinion, Basarwa diversity can be largely explained as the result of different mobility patterns. The causes of these differences are many. Some Basarwa groups have become sedentary because of encouragement from Bantu-speakers (for example at Kutse where a borehole was drilled nearby and, prior to the 1990 dry season, free maize meal was distributed). Others have been sedentary for a long time, such as those living along the Nata River (Hitchcock 1982; 1987b). I link the extent of incorporation of Bantu culture by different Basarwa groups, as indicated by, for example, the presence of a chief, *kgotla* or court, and subsistence changes, largely, though not solely, to the extent and length of time a group has been sedentary. This, in part, may explain why many sedentary Basarwa groups have adopted aspects of Bantu-speakers' politics, while nomadic ones have not (see Kent 1989; 1990).¹²

Diversity should not surprise anthropologists working in the area since one of the few existing pan-Basarwa similarities is a general flexibility in their culture (for example, see Barnard 1988a on kinship; Vierich 1981; 1982 on subsistence; Kent & Vierich 1989 on mobility and spatial patterning; see also Guenther 1986b). The presence of one type of adaptation to local conditions and history does not make another type any less real. Because my research area has been at Kutse, to which a number of individuals have recently moved from the Central Kalahari where they still maintain close ties, my work partially supports the view of the Basarwa presented by Lee, Silberbauer and Tanaka (the latter two worked in the Central Kalahari where most Kutse residents came from within the past few years). Had I worked elsewhere in the Kalahari I would probably have accepted the portrayal of the Basarwa advocated by the revisionists.

Causes of the controversy

[The] tone of the debate has become much too strident for my taste; it is full of polemic sound and fury, posing such threats to scholarship as overstatements of the case, selective presentation or misreading of the data, mistranslation of non-English sources, a straw-man approach to the opposing view, and bathwater-and-baby-tossing (Guenther 1990).

Ironically, the recent backlash against established views of the Basarwa may, in its portrayal of a complete absence of foraging societies in the modern era, be as misleading as the view that all foragers are pristine representatives of a Palaeolithic way of life in which the keeping of domesticates, complex sociopolitical organization and the associated material culture were unknown. There are now claims denying that Basarwa or other societies can be studied as 'real' foragers because for hundreds (if not thousands) of years all supposed foragers 'were heavily dependent upon both trade with food-producing populations and part-time

cultivation or pastoralism' (Headland & Reid 1989: 43). This may be true for some foragers, particularly those inhabiting tropical forests (e.g. Bailey *et al.* 1989), but it is not true for all Basarwa groups, much less for all foragers. Those who claim otherwise are merely substituting one inaccurate overgeneralization with another.

As scientists we need to understand the causes of the recent controversy, evident in publications such as *Science* (Lewin 1988) and *Science News* with titles like 'A world that never existed' (Bower 1989: 264) or 'The hunter-gatherer myth of southern Africa' (Volkman 1986). The actual causes of the debate are multiple. One cause lies in the tendency for ethnographic research to be conducted primarily in one subgroup during one time period, which then constitutes the archetypical view of the group. Fortunately, with the Basarwa, a number of different groups, such as the G/wi, G//ana, !Kung, Nharo, Kūā, !Xō, and Tuya, have now been studied in detail over a 30–40 year period. I believe that a similar degree of diversity would be found among other hunter-gatherers if the same amount of fieldwork were conducted among different groups within each society over a span of four or five decades. Drawing examples from other African hunter-gatherers, we know that there are some Hadza who are more tied to missions than others (Woodburn 1988: 37; Ndagala 1988); and that between Central African Pygmy net hunters and bow and arrow hunters there exist differences that transcend distinctions of hunting technique or ecology (Bailey & Auger 1989; Curran & Wilkie 1989; Hewlett 1989, in press; Pedersen & Waehle 1988; Turnbull 1965). Within single groups, such as the Mbuti, there is variation in the amount of dependence on villagers (Harako 1981). Studies also indicate variation between groups. For example, the Aka Pygmies appear to depend less on cultigens produced by horticulturalists, spend more time in the forest and generally live further away from villages than do the Efe Pygmies (Walker & Hewlett 1990: 384, 394).

The mistaken idea of a pan-hunter-gatherer culture for any one area may stem more from the lack of intensive research in a particular society than from the nature of the societies under investigation or the predilections of the anthropologists who study them. For the same reason, scholars using secondary sources based primarily on Ngamiland rather than on other parts of the Kalahari have been led to draw potentially misleading conclusions and are thus fuelling the current controversy. As Bird-David has remarked, 'If to regard the hunter-gatherer social system as generated by a foraging economy can be described as too "isolationist", then the full swing to presenting it as the outcome of trade-contact with adjacent societies can be seen as too "integrationist". Both explanations can be criticized as partial and simplistic' (1988: 19; see also 1990).

The popular materialist bias towards ecology and economy on the part of most anthropologists who study foragers has led to an overemphasis on subsistence and has limited the scope of inquiry. Although a certain mode of subsistence procurement is one characteristic that hunter-gatherers have in common, other aspects of their culture vary. Such variation extends from the egalitarian nomadism of some Basarwa to the stratified sedentism of American Northwest Coast Indians. As a consequence of overemphasizing the mode of subsistence, some scholars have considered it to be a causal, explanatory variable. In fact, one of the few things

these societies share in common is an emphasis on hunting and gathering. Some anthropologists, however, focus on similarities among hunter-gatherers and ignore important differences in mobility, sociopolitical organization and so on (e.g. Winterhalder 1987; Whitelaw 1989).¹³ Foragers who are nomadic, on the other hand, do share things in common, notably an emphasis on equality.

Another cause of the controversy results from the mistaken notion that all Basarwa groups are alike, so that when differences between groups or between time periods are exposed, some claim that the original investigator must have been wrong, rather than acknowledging the diversity and flexibility of Basarwa society (e.g. Bower 1989; Schrire 1980; Volkman 1986; Wilmsen 1989). The fact that there are Basarwa in Namibia (Gordon 1984) or in South Africa (Schrire 1980) who have not been foragers for many decades does not mean that no Basarwa groups are today, or were in the recent past, primarily foragers.

A third cause of the controversy is a misunderstanding of inter-ethnic interaction. Along with diversity, we also find variation in the type of interaction that has occurred or is occurring between hunter-gatherer and non-hunter-gatherer societies. Generalizations about contact with neighbouring people can be as inaccurate as the notion of there being no contact at all. As suggested by Bird-David (1988: 29-30), some hunter-gatherer social systems may incorporate other non-foragers' economic and social resources in ways which actually maintain their hunting and gathering way of life rather than obliterating it. Thus, we can see that not only has the intensity and kind of contact between foragers and their neighbours been variable, but its consequences may have been equally variable. Some Basarwa have been profoundly influenced by their neighbours (as have some groups of African Pygmies and the Agta of the Philippines, for example) while others have not. This does not imply that any Basarwa group has ever been an island in a sea of Bantu-speakers, but rather that the nature of the contact has been varied and the resulting ramifications of that contact have been equally varied (Solway & Lee 1990; Biesele *et al.* 1989; Hitchcock 1982; Vierich 1982).

We cannot and should not assume that all contact, including trade, has had the same impact on all Basarwa groups, if for no other reason than that the nature of the contact between groups has not been isomorphic through time (as has recently been pointed out by several scholars, e.g. Wiessner 1990: 135; Yellen 1990b: 138,¹⁴ and others). Basarwa contact and trade with Bantu-speakers has a long history, as has been conclusively demonstrated by Wilmsen and Denbow (Denbow & Wilmsen 1986; Denbow 1984; Wilmsen 1989; Wilmsen & Denbow 1990); however, this contact has not been convincingly proven to have caused massive acculturation or assimilation. In the past, Europeans and Euroamericans often demanded that those who traded with them had to act and think like them (e.g. colonial governments and missionaries). As a result, contact usually entailed profound changes that often destroyed the very foundation of a society's culture. However, this did not necessarily occur in all situations of interaction, especially where the contact was with non-Westerners.

For example, trade, even that conducted over millennia, does not necessarily completely transform a society. Whereas all Basarwa groups have been in contact with their Bantu neighbours, some Basarwa groups have been more influenced by, and dependent on, their neighbours than others. The term 'commercial

foragers' (Headland & Reid 1989) may be appropriate for some groups, such as the Agta, but it is not appropriate for all Basarwa groups nor for all foragers. As noted by Kabo, the 'claim that all hunter-gatherers have experienced "acculturation" to some degree is as rash as the claim that none have. It is necessary to clarify in each case the exact nature of the external influence, how general and how intensive it was, how it affected the life of a given society, and upon what specific areas of that life it touched' (1989: 206). A similar stance has been taken by Bicchieri (1990: 123), who wrote that in regard to the Basarwa, 'Acculturation is situationally varied, and in the context of adaptation contact and autonomy are not mutually exclusive; not being pristine does not mean being degraded and encapsulated. The preponderance of evidence suggests that hundreds of years of contact did not result in abandonment of autonomy by groups characterized by "flexible egalitarian sharing".' Though Wilmsen (1989: 10) may be justified in criticizing those anthropologists who have granted the Basarwa antiquity while denying them history, he himself may be criticized for granting them history while denying them autonomy.

Among Indian hunter-gatherers, a general flexibility in social relations, as mentioned for the Basarwa, has been extended to interactions with non-foragers through a rationale described by Bird-David as 'with Romans behave like a Roman'; when 'Romans' require assimilation, hunter-gatherers only superficially comply without altering their entire culture (1988: 29). This, then,

enables 'other' people to be encompassed within the hunter-gatherer social system, presupposing nothing, not even an awareness – let alone acceptance – of the role assumed.... [Such a view] may explain how hunter-gatherers have persisted in spite of the constant contact with people from varied and changing surrounding societies. The hunter-gatherer social system, without being fundamentally changed, has been able to incorporate 'other people' as economic as well as social resources, to be used for maintaining the hunter-gatherer way of life' (Bird-David 1988: 29-30).

Expanding on a concept proposed by Cashdan (1979), there may even be ecological reasons why some Basarwa have maintained a long-term foraging existence while trading with Bantu-speakers. To avoid competition between peoples, ethnic 'groups in plural societies often occupy distinct niches, specializing in their mode of subsistence along ethnic lines and exchanging the products of this specialization' (Cashdan 1979: 68). Archaeological and ethnohistorical data (Denbow 1984, 1986; Denbow & Wilmsen 1986; Hitchcock 1987*b*; and others) suggest that the Basarwa have been in contact with Bantu-speakers for thousands of years; yet they have still managed to maintain a separate ethnic identity – as evidenced by their language, mobility patterns, kinship, religion, gender relations, and so on.

Patterson (1990: 133) argues that 'contact does not automatically entail the domination and exploitation of peoples that practise hunter-forager modes of existence'. Do we want to say that because hunter-gatherers in general, and Basarwa in particular, have merely interacted with Bantu-speaking or other agropastoralists on some level, depending on the group and the time period, they are therefore 'tainted' and not real hunter-gatherers? What does that make the agropastoralists with whom the contact occurred – i.e. are they no longer real agropastoralists because they have interacted with hunter-gatherers? Because many Basarwa keep a few goats some anthropologists do not consider them

foragers, while ignoring the fact that most rural Bantu-speakers in Botswana forage to some extent, depending on the group, the season and the year (as pointed out by Kent 1991, n.d.; Vierich 1982; Wilmsen 1989; and others) – yet they are *not* referred to as foragers.

A fourth cause of the controversy lies in theoretical biases which have led to data being misrepresented, overemphasized, or inaccurately presented. The desire to advance an ideological argument has at times resulted in questionable uses of the data, as noted by Guenther in the passage cited above. All theoretical orientations prejudice their adherents to emphasize some data in favour of others. The adoption of explicit theoretical orientations in anthropological research is definitely preferable to the atheoretical descriptions common in the anthropology of fifty years ago. Nonetheless, Silberbauer (1981) and Tanaka (1980) may be faulted for the 'evolutionary' blinders that prevented them from discussing in more detail the presence of goats among the Central Kalahari Basarwa, and their interaction with non-foraging people. Criticisms of the work of these anthropologists, as well as that of Lee and Yellen, have been amply elaborated upon by the revisionists in numerous publications (Gordon 1984; Schrire 1980; Wilmsen 1989; Wilmsen & Denbow 1990).

The revisionists have gone even further in selecting data because of their theoretical orientation, which is one of political economy. For example, Yellen and Brooks (1990: 18–19) point out that the prehistoric presence of cattle at /Xai/Xai is based solely on the evidence of one maxilla that is more likely buffalo than cow and is more likely intrusive than deposited *in situ*. Concerning excavations at Dobe and /Xai/Xai that are supposed to provide evidence of Iron Age interaction and perhaps even assimilation of the indigenous foraging society, Yellen (1990b: 517) wrote that 'Wilmsen and Denbow seriously misstate my position, and the reader is referred back to this... original source'. Even some of the strongest advocates of the revisionist stance (e.g. Gordon 1990) point out serious problems with the translation and general misuse of ethnohistorical sources which are used to support the political economy position when they actually contradict it. Wilmsen and Denbow (1990) even contradict some of Wilmsen's own earlier writing without any explanation for the change in interpretation. For example, Wilmsen (1982: 100) wrote that his research spanning 1973–1980 showed that 'until 1976 zu/oasi [!Kung] here [at /Xai/Xai] lived in three *recognizably* different resource dependencies – 25 percent subsisted almost entirely on bush foods obtained by foraging, another 25 percent depended substantially on domestic foods as do the Herero, 50 percent employed a mixed strategy. These subsistence strategies are not mutually exclusive, but, among foragers, 90 percent of dietary input came from wild sources' (Wilmsen 1982: 100; emphasis added). It was appropriate to Wilmsen in 1982 to consider some !Kung as foragers at least during the 1970s.

In a comment on Wilmsen and Denbow's (1990) argument against the view of the Basarwa held by Lee and other traditionalists, Vansina (1990: 516) wrote: 'The evidence is overwhelming, and when a *truth* so evident provokes further debate it is no wonder that some of us betray some irritation. This irritation leads to a few errors and overstatements here' (emphasis added). Although Vansina cites five serious errors, including a mistranslation that in actuality 'does not

present Wilmsen and Denbow's case very well', the reviewer nevertheless concludes, 'But one cannot capitalize such *blemishes* to deny the obvious' (Vansina 1990: 516; emphasis added). But can one or should one overlook errors, overstatements and 'blemishes' to make a point about what is perceived as Truth? When data are not presented factually, people are forced to choose sides on the basis of personalities rather than of the data. If one cannot rely on the information presented there is no way to assess the arguments; one must merely assume that the Wilmsen-Denbow Truth is inherently more true than the Lee-Silberbauer-Tanaka Truth. How many errors are acceptable in order to make a theoretical point? In the same article Wilmsen and Denbow write that Kutse, 'where Kent (1990) claims to have found "relatively independent foragers" in a persisting "hinterland"... is the *most frequently visited game reserve in Botswana*, largely because it is *only three hours by car from the capital*, Gaborone; it has been a *locus of Kgalagadi and Kwena residence for centuries*' (Wilmsen & Denbow 1990: 493; emphasis added). On these grounds, they imply the Kutse Basarwa cannot be considered to be foragers. Aside from the facts that I have never used the term 'hinterland', and that no Kwena live at Kutse, the claim that the Khutse Game Reserve is the most frequently visited reserve in Botswana is not supported by any data. Instead, government records clearly show that Chobe is the most frequently visited game reserve in Botswana. Seven times as many tourists visited the Chobe Game Reserve in only *one month* during 1988, June, as visited the Khutse Game Reserve over the *entire year* of 1988 (Fowkes 1990; Kalahari Conservation Society 1989)!¹⁵

Do minor misrepresentations, such as Wilmsen and Denbow's claim (1990: 493) that the Kutse Basarwa cannot be foragers because they are only a three-hour drive from Gaborone, be permitted (if the roads were paved one could easily drive the 240 km in three hours, but, because they are not, the usual driving time is closer to five hours)? And is the precise time it takes to get to Kutse from Gaborone a relevant measure of assimilation? Would it not be better to ask how many people have actually been to Gaborone? The answer to that question shows that the proximity of Kutse to Gaborone is irrelevant. Of twenty-six Kutse Basarwa questioned in 1990, nineteen had never been to Gaborone; only four individuals had ever been in Gaborone for more than a day or two, one of whom was my interpreter and field assistant.¹⁶

These are minor, perhaps even trivial, details. However, if small errors and misrepresentations are permissible to further one's ideological argument, at what point do they become large enough to be unacceptable? Harpending's review of Wilmsen's (1989) book, *Land filled with flies*, offers a case in point. He writes:

My criticisms may seem like carping at trivia, but the kinds of abuses that I describe happen again and again in every context about which I have any knowledge.... Almost every foray into linguistics appears to be entirely contrived, created from nothing, even when there is no reason to contrive anything.... There is a bizarre analysis of !Kung kin terms, for example.... Wilmsen presents us with the remarkable analysis that the adjectives large and small, *n!a* and *ma*, are really possessives, indicating mutuality among people who address each other with these terms! It is as if I were to claim that the English word grandmother refers to a custom whereby old people stay at home and grind wheat for the family bread and that grandmother is really a corruption of grindmother. Of course if I were to write such nonsense it would never be published. Editors and referees would laugh me out the door because they would be

familiar with English. But hardly anyone in Europe and North America is familiar with !Kung and Otjiherero (Harpending 1991: 314).

In response to Wilmsen and Denbow's article which presents the revisionist's view of the Basarwa, Gordon (1990), Guenther (1990), Lee (1990), Ross (1990), Solway (1990), Tanaka (1990), Yellen (1990) and Vansina (1990) all point out different errors either in the translation of non-English texts upon which the revisionist argument is based, or in ethnographic or archaeological detail. These are in addition to Harpending's (1991) examples of specific errors and his statement that numerous others exist throughout Wilmsen's (1989) book, and in addition to Wilmsen and Denbow's (1990) errors concerning Kutse mentioned above (for others, see also Lee & Guenther 1991; Silberbauer 1991; and Yellen & Brooks 1990). Perhaps each error in itself is small; when does the number of small errors become too large to ignore?

While a paper on hunting should not have to devote equal space to herding, the revisionists are correct in stating that such a paper should also not completely ignore herding, for that would imply that it did not occur. Nevertheless, researchers should not be expected to study all facets of a society equally, and should be permitted to emphasize those aspects they find of most interest. People should also be allowed to change their minds as they gather new data, although they need to explain precisely how the new data invalidate earlier conclusions and why. Anthropologists need to work within a clear theoretical orientation. However, should it ever be considered acceptable to make errors and misrepresentations of fact (or 'blemishes' as Vansina calls them), even if it is to further a currently popular theoretical orientation? This is a question each anthropologist must answer for her or himself. My own view is that factual errors, overstatements and misrepresentations are not acceptable, even if one believes that they serve a worthy goal, Truth, or one's theoretical orientation.

The archaeological side of the controversy

The controversy may also stem from the desire of some anthropologists to find an easy analogue to apply to prehistoric data. However, the Hadza, Aché, Basarwa, African Pygmies, Inuit, Agta and others will not yield that type of information because none are, nor have been for thousands of years, Palaeolithic peoples ignorant of all domesticates and post-Stone Age technology (a point that has been widely documented, for example by Headland & Reid 1989). What studies of these groups can reveal – and this is vital for understanding the past as well as the present – is the nature of foraging cultures and how they are organized (also see Hutterer 1989: 57). These groups can provide valuable data to test hypotheses about other past and present foragers, if such information is used judiciously and not applied uncritically to archaeological data, as often occurs with the use of ethnographic analogy (as pointed out by Binford 1968; Clark 1968; Freeman 1968; Kent 1987). While we can understand how aspects of culture are interrelated in contemporary foraging societies, we cannot assume that all details of modern Basarwa society (or any other modern group) were present in precisely the same detail in past hunting and gathering societies.

Once again, we can see the danger of overgeneralization, and the problem of failing to recognize, in this case, both cultural and temporal diversity. How

hunting, sharing, mobility and politics interact, for example, is not tied to a particular group at a particular time, and knowledge of the nature of that interaction is what archaeologists can gain from the study of modern peoples. This does not belittle the importance of forager studies to anthropology in general and to archaeology in particular; if anything, it should enhance such studies because they can reveal the interconnexions among different aspects of culture and behaviour, upon which models of the past often rely, but which would not otherwise be knowable. These interconnexions do not necessarily change through time and are therefore appropriate for understanding the archaeological record (for example, how the transition to sedentism affects general subsistence strategies, how economy interacts with the environment, how sharing influences distributions of faunal remains, or how sociopolitical organization articulates with the division of labour).

Discussion

There is a widespread and dangerous tendency among us anthropologists, property-holders all, to deny to low-status groups with little property the relative autonomy and integrity that we are more willing to concede to high-status groups with their, to us, more familiar and intelligible hierarchies and wealth (Woodburn 1988: 64).

Rather than denying the existence of diversity we should be studying it. Not all modern foragers, be they Basarwa, Hadza, African Pygmy, Aché, Agta or others, are pure hunter-gatherers because no group, Palaeolithic or modern, is an island or completely isolated. Anthropologists who strive to find such a pristine, ideal hunting and gathering group will invariably be frustrated. This may explain why there has been such a backlash concerning the lack of 'pristineness' among the Basarwa.

It may also explain why most anthropologists accept unquestioningly the legitimacy of using African Pygmies as models for the past, although some groups are, and have been, tied to horticulturalists in an intimate way. For example, some African Pygmies can be considered to be, in one sense, vicarious farmers.¹⁷ Efe women scare birds from fields, assist in planting, weeding and harvesting Lese gardens and other activities, while men help villagers in clearing and planting new gardens (Peacock 1985; Bailey *et al.* 1989; Bailey & Peacock 1988; Grinker 1990). Other Pygmy groups, such as the Bagoumbe, have been noted sporadically planting their own small gardens (Pedersen & Waehle 1988: 78). Efe men have been observed spending as much as half their time in Lese villages when camped nearby (Bailey 1985: 156). Some African Pygmies hunt commercially for Bantu markets (Hart 1978; Hart & Hart 1986) and others keep domesticated chickens (Fisher 1986). Just as with the Basarwa, recent research suggests profound differences in hunting and gathering and interaction with villagers among different Pygmy groups (Walker & Hewlett 1990). However, because most anthropologists never considered the Pygmies to be isolated survivals of Stone-age hunter-gatherers, they were not disturbed to learn about their relationships with farmers, and the classification of Pygmies as hunter-gatherers has been retained.

Likewise, most anthropologists do not question the validity of the Aché data, despite the fact that most Aché today live primarily on missions and hunt and gather only to supplement their domesticated crops, domesticated animals and

food distributed by missionaries (Hawkes *et al.* 1982: 381–2). Modern Aché spend approximately 25–37 per cent. of their time foraging, the remainder is spent at missions where they cultivate crops and care for domesticated animals (Hill *et al.* 1987: 5; Hill & Hawkes 1983).¹⁸ But because some anthropologists mistakenly thought that the Basarwa represented something they never did (i.e. isolated Palaeolithic foragers), and because intra-Basarwa diversity was never investigated, the merit of studying the Basarwa as foragers has come to be questioned. Data from all of these groups can be, and have been, used to formulate models of past foraging behaviour. It is appropriate to continue studying Basarwa and other foragers in this light, if the data are used critically – not as data from isolated twentieth-century Palaeolithic foragers unaware of domesticates and of the larger world around them, but as data from twentieth-century foragers.

It is important to recognize and study both temporal and spatial diversity, and not mask it with generalizations. A general flexibility in culture and behaviour has enabled foraging to exist as a subsistence strategy up to the present century, and it may possibly account for the initial success of *Homo sapiens*. At the same time, those who claim that no generalizations are possible among the Basarwa because of the divergent histories of particular groups are (1) overgeneralizing; (2) using particularistic analogy rather than models or explanations of the past that look at relationships and broader issues; and (3) misunderstanding the nature of comparative studies. It is possible to study foragers, including the various Basarwa groups, in a cross-cultural, as well as prehistoric, context if we take into account the diversity present in mobility patterns, sociopolitical organization, and so on.

Because my research has been at Kutse, my data and view of the Basarwa lead me to conclude that they are twentieth century foragers, the study of whom can provide information for models of the past and present, if the data are used critically and judiciously. Had my research area been located elsewhere in the Kalahari I might have argued on the side of those who claim the Basarwa to represent an underclass of the dominant Batswana society, a people who have lost their autonomy and foraging culture. Once again, this underlines the importance of recognizing the diversity present among Basarwa. Just as with Pygmy and other contemporary foraging societies, one's perspective depends on where and when research is conducted.

Conclusions

In conclusion, we can accept that at one time in the past there were people who exclusively hunted and gathered wild products with no reliance on, or knowledge of, domesticates, but those people are as extinct as is the Paleolithic. Modern African Pygmies, Inuit, Aché and Basarwa all depend to various degrees on domesticates. However, the emphasis, at least for the Kutse Basarwa and for other groups, is still primarily on foraging. Depending on the Basarwa group, they differ significantly from their Bantu-speaking agropastoralist neighbours in language, religious rituals, mode of socialization, orientation towards labour, gender relations and attitudes, political structure and many other aspects. Failure to recognize and accommodate the diversity among the Basarwa as well as among other foragers masks the flexible nature of foraging societies which is so important for us to study.

The causes of the hunter-gatherer controversy are multiple and include a misunderstanding of the data, overgeneralization and theoretical bias. We need to question whether the current backlash, not only against Basarwa studies in particular but also against forager studies in general, is merely replacing one illusion with another. I hope we can dispense with illusions by acknowledging the diversity and flexibility of foraging societies and so return to the study of these societies and their diversity. Such studies are unequivocally relevant to the understanding of past, present and future hunter-gatherers.

NOTES

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¹ The terms 'Bushmen' and San are both considered derogatory, the difference only being that the former is an English term and the latter is a Khoikhoi ('Hottentot') term (Cashdan 1983: 64). Basarwa, although also sometimes used in an insulting manner, tends to be a more neutral term that refers to the hunter-gatherers of the Kalahari in Setswana, one of the official languages of Botswana (Basarwa is a Setswana word meaning 'people of the wilderness', Guenther 1986a: 45, see also Schapera 1930: 31 who originally suggested this translation). Basarwa is used in Botswana to designate this group of people and is understood by the people as referring to them, although not necessarily in a derogatory way (*contra* Wilmsen 1990a: 31; see also Silberbauer 1989; Kent 1990). They, and remote Bakgalagadi, are administratively referred to as Remote Area Dwellers (RADs; Hitchcock 1988). Some people will refer to this group in a disparaging manner regardless of what term is used, so that any name will at some time be used in a derogatory way. We need to change those peoples' view of this group, not the name.

Basarwa and 'Bushmen' have been used by Batswana and Bakgalagadi to designate all rural people without cattle, as is the more modern term RADs often employed today (also noted by Wilmsen 1990a). Therefore, some confusion has arisen about 'Bushmen' who were in servitude to Bakwena, many of whom were, in reality, rural Bakgalagadi without cattle. This does not negate the presence of a distinct Basarwa ethnic group as some have implied, but it does mean that dominant societies did not always differentiate between the groups that made up their rural neighbours.

² Wilmsen (1990a: 21) has written that 'Anthropology codified this collective separation of "all the Bushmen in their native condition" (Schapera 1930: 75); in doing so, anthropologists provided scientific sanction for the then relatively recent idea that the social and political history of San-speaking peoples was radically different and separate from that of Batswana. This was intended, in Schapera's words, to provide the scientific tools with which "the administrator, the missionary, the economist, and the educationist, each in his own way now moulding the life of the Native into conformity with the standards of European civilization" could proceed.'

³ Kutse is spelt either with or without an 'h'. I spell the game reserve with an 'h' and the name of the community located just outside the game reserve without an 'h', in order to keep them separate.

⁴ It is somewhat ironic that Wilmsen earlier wrote that approximately 25 per cent. of the Basarwa he studied in the /Xai/Xai area in the early 1970s were foragers who subsisted almost entirely on wild foods obtained by foraging and that his subsistence studies demonstrated changes that were a consequence of the recent shift from full-time foraging to agropastoralism and/or employment-oriented lifestyles: 'This paper compares anthropometric data taken from zu/oasi (zu) San of /ai/ai, Botswana, living on three different diets: 1) traditional hunting and gathering, 2) a mixed diet of wild and domestic foods, 3) and settled agropastoralism. These data were

collected at different points in time as the zu were making the transition from the former to the latter economies' (Hausman & Wilmsen 1985: 563). Draper and Cashdan (1988) also describe differences between settled and still foraging !Kung during this time period.

⁵ Traill (1978: 147) wrote that 'One final point on inter-relatedness among these languages: speakers of !xū (Northern), /gwi (Central), !xǝ (Southern), /nu^hki (Southern) and //xegwi (Southern) are totally unable to understand one another. The linguistic distance between these languages is vast, and neighbouring groups of Bushmen, leading identical sorts of lives and sounding to the uneducated ear for all the world as if they speak the same language, would have to be bilingual to understand one another'.

⁶ Vierich's figures are calculated a little differently from mine. I was very conservative. If anyone had an economic relationship with a Mokgalagadi or Motswana even for a few hours during the 12-month period between May 1988 and 1989, he/she was counted in the percentage of people who had worked for Bakgalagadi/Batswana during that year. Likewise, any persons with goats within the past three to four years were included in the figures of Basarwa who own goats. Thus, in some cases, I counted people as having worked for Bakgalagadi that others may not have included.

⁷ It is important not to assume that Bantu-speaking peoples only influenced Basarwa in a uni-directional manner. Bantu-speakers who entered some areas actually acquired customs from the local Basarwa, including language (see Campbell 1988; 1990). The term 'serf' has been used to cover a variety of situations that range from forced unpaid labour to paid labour performed for the same family or lineage over long periods of time (see Biesele *et al.* 1989; Hitchcock 1987).

⁸ Occasionally a small number of men in the community are hired by the government to work for one or two days improving the roads or other tasks at the nearby game reserve. In addition, curios are sold to tourists to the game reserve, although this is also a relatively infrequent event (BotswanaCraft does not buy curios at Kutse as it does elsewhere).

⁹ After the dry season of 1988, the government sent two young Bakgalagadi women from Salajwe, who had had a two week training course, to Kutse to teach children to read and write in Setswana. They live in one of the established camps at Kutse and teach for a few hours in the morning. The number of children varies quite a bit. Because the women are from Salajwe, the closest town to Kutse, and are familiar with the community and the people who live there, their presence has had little influence on social or political change at Kutse. This differs from other communities that have a formal school with professional Batswana teachers.

¹⁰ These figures are based on the following data that measure time spent in subsistence related activities (other non-subsistence activities are not included in the figures): seven weeks of continuous observations in 1987 and seven weeks in 1990 of one Mosarwa who spent all of the time devoted to subsistence activities in foraging (he does not own goats); nine weeks on and off from 1987 to 1990 in 2- to 3-week periods of continuous observation of another Mosarwa who spent 81 per cent. of his time foraging; and seven weeks of continuous observations of a Mosarwa in 1990 who spent 92 per cent. of his time foraging. Foraging time would be increased if I included time spent in the construction and maintenance of hunting equipment or in ritual activities associated with hunting. In contrast, the herding figures include all time spent caring for goats. Foraging is by far the dominant subsistence endeavour at Kutse.

¹¹ The drought relief programme was reinstated for the first six months of 1991 and then again discontinued.

¹² Testart (1982; 1988) suggests that the key to explaining hunter-gatherer diversity is storage first and mobility second. In contrast, I reverse this order of importance and suggest that storage practices are dependent upon mobility strategies, which are more important to creating diversity among foragers than are storage techniques.

¹³ Archaeological studies indicate a large amount of diversity among past hunter-gatherers as well (e.g. Price & Brown 1985).

¹⁴ Yellen (1990b: 138) writes, 'Taken together, ethnographic, historic, and archaeological data demonstrate the impossibility of simple generalizations [concerning the Basarwa], and the history and prehistory of individual subregions must be approached on a case-by-case basis'.

¹⁵ Despite the proximity of Kutse to Gaborone, few tourists find the Khutse Game Reserve as attractive as the Chobe Game Reserve. The reasons for this include unpaved and difficult roads to Khutse, a lack of any facilities at the game reserve including drinkable water (the locals drink the water but it is very brackish and even the game scouts haul in their own water) and the type

of animals present (there are no elephants or other water-dependent animals of the kind that tourists enjoy seeing).

¹⁶ Of the only seven individuals who had been to Gaborone, two were taken once to the hospital in Gaborone and never went outside the building, and one went twice for brief visits with my field assistant.

¹⁷ At least some African Pygmies are much more horticulturally oriented than was previously thought. 'In the central and southern Ituri, Mbuti tend either to be in camps near villages, where they provide garden labour in exchange for agricultural food, or else they are in forest hunting camps where they acquire meat to exchange for cassava, plantains, or rice' (Hart & Hart 1986: 48). The amount of meat consumed varies between African Pygmy groups, as it does among the Basarwa. On the basis of a sample of 33 days of observations among Efe Pygmies, Bailey and Peacock (1988: 101-105) found that meat accounts for only 8.5 per cent. of total calorific intake (10.9 per cent. by weight), fish 0.5 per cent. of total intake (0.8 per cent. by weight), and wild plants 14.0 per cent. of total intake (7.9 per cent. by weight). Cassava and other cultivated plants make up 63.5 per cent. of calorific intake (70.9 per cent. by weight; Bailey & Peacock 1988: 101). Mbuti Pygmies averaged '375 grams (g) of butchered meat per adult per day... [in combination with] an average of 60 g of rice and 330 g of cassava flour....' (Hart 1978: 340). Thus, the amount of reliance on cultivated foods varies between African Pygmy groups.

¹⁸ Most researchers of the Aché state that they have been sedentary and horticulturalists only for the past 10-20 years (Hurtado 1985; Hurtado *et al.* 1985; Hill & Hurtado 1989). Prior to the mid-1970s they are thought by these researchers to have been solely hunter-gatherers (Hill *et al.* 1985: 30). This view has recently been challenged by a number of anthropologists working in similar tropical rain forest environments who maintain that horticulture is a necessary component of foragers' subsistence in such environments because of the paucity of available carbohydrate resources (e.g. Headland & Reid 1989 for the Philippines; Bailey *et al.* 1989 for Central Africa; and Sponsel 1989 for South America). However, not all anthropologists working in these environments agree with the characterization of the tropical rain forest as unable to support autonomous groups of hunter-gatherers (e.g., and in reference to the Pygmies, Hewlett 1990, personal communication; Bahuchet *et al.* 1990; for tropical forests in general, Colinvaux & Bush 1991, but see Bailey *et al.* 1991). Regardless of the eventual outcome of this debate among researchers of tropical foraging, the same is not true for many desert regions, such as the Kalahari, which are environments capable of supporting foragers in the absence of horticulture or pastoralism.

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Visions réalistes ou idéalistes des chasseurs-collecteurs : actualité de la polémique en cours.

Résumé

La validité des représentations antérieures des Basarwa (Bushmen ou San), et des chasseurs-collecteurs en général, a été récemment remise en question. Au dire de certains anthropologues, les Basarwa seraient des chasseurs-collecteurs dotés d'une culture autonome et distincte de celles de leurs voisins agro-pastoraux. D'autres soutiennent que les Basarwa ne sont guère différents de tous ceux qui, marqués par la pauvreté rurale, forment une 'sous-classe' au sein d'une société agro-pastorale plus large. Une recherche de terrain effectuée parmi des Basarwa sédentarisés depuis peu, complétée d'un examen de la documentation disponible, indique qu'en fait les groupes de chasseurs-collecteurs du Kalahari sont caractérisés par une variabilité beaucoup plus grande que ce qui est communément admis. C'est le manque d'attention à cette grande diversité culturelle – pourtant propre à la société Basarwa prise dans son ensemble – qui est à l'origine d'un certain nombre de débats. Ces débats, qui plus est, ont été largement déformés par des orientations théoriques tendancieuses ainsi que des généralisations non-fondées. Alors qu'il est impossible de distinguer certains groupes Basarwa de leurs voisins agro-pastoraux, d'autres s'en distinguent nettement par leurs orientations de chasseurs-collecteurs, bien que ces activités ne soient pas exclusives.